

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 1 June 2020 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

F W Letch (Chairman)
W Burke, Mrs C P Daw, J M Downes, R Evans, Mrs I Hill,
B Holdman, B A Moore, R L Stanley, B G J Warren and
A Wilce

Apologies

Councillor(s)

R J Chesterton

Also Present

Councillor(s)

G Barnell, Mrs M E Squires and L D Taylor

Present

Officer(s):

Kathryn Tebbey (Head of Legal (Monitoring Officer)),
Andrew Busby (Group Manager for Corporate Property and
Commercial Assets), Stuart Noyce (Group Manager for
Street Scene and Open Spaces), Catherine Yandle (Group
Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security),
Maria De Leiburne (Legal Services Team Leader), Clare
Robathan (Scrutiny Officer) and Carole Oliphant (Member
Services Officer)

10 **Virtual Meeting Protocol**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the virtual meeting protocol.

Note: *Protocol previously circulated and attached to the minutes

11 **Apologies and Substitute Members (00.03.44)**

Apologies were received from Cllr R J Chesterton

12 **Declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct (00.05.36)**

Cllr R L Stanley declared a Personal interest as a Director of 3 Rivers Developments Ltd

13 **Public Question Time (00.05.40)**

The following questions were provided by Mr Quinn and were read out by the Chairman:

The Risk: SPV - 3 Rivers - Failure of the Company: states that "Regular Monitoring is demonstrated by: The Board of 3 Rivers deliver a half yearly report to the Cabinet which provides an update on their delivery against their business plan".

The Risk: SPV Governance Arrangements - 3 Rivers: states that "Openness and Transparency is demonstrated by: Regular reports to Cabinet, in open session where possible".

Since the last report to Cabinet by 3 Rivers was in June 2019, a full year ago, the mitigating actions are clearly not being fulfilled and are therefore ineffective.

So, my questions are:

a) Why isn't the colour band for these items shown as Red?

b) Why isn't the Current effectiveness of the Actions shown as 'Poor – Action required (3)'?

The Chairman informed Members that the questions would be addressed at the appropriate agenda item.

14 **Member Forum (00.07.51)**

There were no issues raised under this item.

15 **Minutes of the previous meeting (00.08.19)**

The minutes of the last meeting of 18th May 2020 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

16 **Chairmans Announcements (00.10.11)**

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had attended a Covid 19 Webinar and that he had circulated the notes onto Members

17 **Cabinet Member for Environment (00.11.12)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the *report of the Cabinet Member for the Environment highlighting area's within his portfolio.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment expressed his thanks to all staff working under his portfolio and praised their dedication and work ethic during the current crisis. He explained that the grass had been cut in the open spaces ready for reopening, no refuse collections had been missed and that the recycling teams had dealt with 25% more tonnage than the same period last year and higher than Christmas levels.

He gave an overview of his report and informed Members that new vehicles would be added to the fleet in the summer and that small electrical items such as toasters and kettles would be able to be collected and recycled when they were in place.

Members echoed his thanks to all officers throughout the Council who had been working hard during the pandemic.

Consideration was given to:

- Difficult choices which may need to be made in the future
- Options to employ a private enforcement company
- Play Area inspection costs
- Maintenance of Land now allocated to Tree Planting
- Surplus S106 contributions being used to provide bins in the Towns and Parishes
- Maintenance of new open spaces when developers finished a development

In response to a question regarding CO2 emissions from the new vehicle fleet the Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces informed Members that part of the new contract included the trialling of electric vehicles and that MDDC would be hosting an open day for other Devon districts to see what equipment was on offer. He explained that the current models of electric refuse vehicles did not have the range to be able to cope with the Mid Devon landscape and that they currently cost triple that of a standard vehicle.

There was a general discussion about fly tipping and the education programme which was designed to be a preventative measure rather than a reactionary one. Members agreed that opportunities for prosecution should always be explored.

The Group Manager for Property Services and Commercial Assets informed the Committee that a working group had been established with Tiverton Town Council to try to resolve the problems with the Tiverton Leat to get this operational.

The Group Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces explained to Members that staff had been redeployed from the street cleaning teams which normally operated within the Tiverton town centre due to reduced need and that this would be rectified when staffing levels were back to normal. He explained that there was now a closer collaboration with DCC Highways so that litter busting activities could be coordinated with planned road closures.

In response to a question with regard to the responsibilities for grass verges within the District the Group Manager for Property Services and Commercial Assets confirmed that responsibility maps were currently being finalised and would be made available to Members and the public.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

18 **Performance and Risk (00.48.36)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the Outturn 2019-2020 Performance and Risk report which highlighted performance against target, presented by the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security.

She outlined the contents of the report highlighting that this was the final report for 2019-2020 and the first report to be presented to Committee since the start of the current pandemic.

She addressed the public questions and confirmed that the risks had been scored on the information to hand at the time and were a correct reflection of the information available. She confirmed that in addition to the standard reports about 3 Rivers

Developments Ltd that the Cabinet had commissioned an independent report and that this report was due to be presented to the next meeting of Cabinet. She also confirmed that the next set of performance and risk reports including the 3 Rivers Developments Ltd risks would be reviewed before July.

Consideration was given to:

- The Corporate Plan aim to reduce our Carbon Footprint
- The work of the Economic Development service during the Covid 19 pandemic with co-ordinating business support grants, community voluntary groups and the Councils shielding response
- The volume of fixed penalty notices and the staffing levels of the enforcement team
- The targets for the building of council houses
- Analysis of the housing need

Members requested an update on the current state of the Councils accounting statements and the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security confirmed that the Finance team were finalising these and Grant Thornton were currently commencing the audit.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration informed the Committee that the Planning Policy Advisory Group had agreed a short life task group to review the current S106 Governance arrangements. In response to a question he confirmed that the Tiverton Masterplan would be presented to the Cabinet in August.

Note: *report previously circulated and attached to the minutes

19 **Forward Plan (01.30.45)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the Forward Plan.

Note: *Forward Plan previously circulated and attached to the minutes

20 **Scrutiny Officer Update (01.37.17)**

The Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update on items she had been working on and informed Members that the Customer Experience Working Group would meet to finalise their report and recommendations and that this would be brought before the Committee for approval at the next meeting.

She informed Members that a review into the effect of the Menopause on staff and Members had been requested and that a Working Group on this subject would be finalised at the next meeting.

21 **Start Time of Meetings (01.38.18)**

The Committee **AGREED** to maintain the 2.15pm start time for meetings for the remainder of the 2020/2021 municipal year.

22 Identification of items for future meetings (01.39.54)

The Committee requested further information on the following:

- The 2020-2021 targets for the building of Council Houses and how would the target be achieved
- The analysis of the Housing Need including how this was split into bands
- Viability of Council owned commercial property – What does the Council own and does it make a profit
- Public consultations over the past 2 years– The reasons they were carried out and the costs associated with conducting them

(The meeting ended at 4.05 pm)

CHAIRMAN